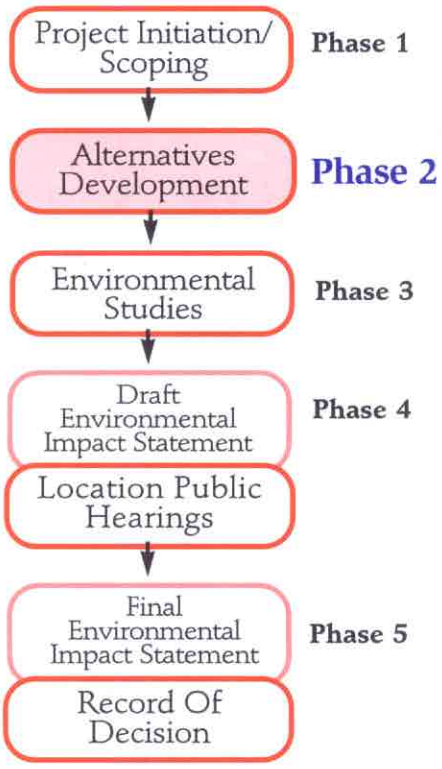
FUTURE 73 NEWS

VDOT

Volume 1, Number 2 May 1998

A newsletter designed to inform, assist, and engage the public in developing the best alternative for I-73.

Steps to Success: Where are We?



The I-73 Location Study is now completing Phase 2 of a three-year study. The Location Study began with defining the need for an interstate highway between the Roanoke Valley and North Carolina (Phase 1). During Phase 2, hundreds of possible road locations, *or alternatives*, have been identified and screened using specific criteria. The criteria and alternatives are presented in this newsletter. In addition, a No-Build Alternative is under consideration.

During Phase 3, which begins this summer, several of the alternatives will undergo detailed environmental and technical analysis. Then, in Phase 4, the data developed in Phases 1, 2 and 3 will become the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which will be available for public review and comment. A location public hearing will be held in spring 1999 to present the results of the study.

Citizens Identify I-73 Locations

More than 1,230 residents of Martinsville, Henry and Franklin counties, and the Roanoke Valley turned out for three January public participation meetings to voice their opinions about the I-73 Location Study. Working with representatives of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), those who attended the meetings offered hundreds of suggestions about improving the U.S. Route 220 corridor and a new interstate.

The greatest number of comments focused on identifying possible routes for a new interstate, I-73 (see Figures 1-4).

"In fact, the members of our I-73 Study Team received more than 775 written comments and maps from the January public meetings," said Fred Altizer, administrator of VDOT's 12-county Salem District. "We are extremely pleased with the large number of interested citizens and the input they have given us so far."

After the public meetings, the I-73 Study Team compiled all comments, including suggestions received for locating a new interstate. Included were ideas received from the telephone information line (**1-888-I73-PLAN**), written comments from citizens and officials representing counties and cities, and the opinions of the Study Team.

Then the team brainstormed specific screening criteria — listed in this newsletter — and began applying the criteria to location suggestions. Also, preliminary data about population centers and environmental resources were considered. Some segments were eliminated because they would have direct impacts on known cultural and historic resources, parklands, wetlands, and/or threatened and endangered species.

Continued on back page

Public Participation Meetings

The suggested locations for I-73 will be presented during three Public Participation Meetings. Plan now to attend the meeting nearest you. Come any time at your convenience. We welcome your opinions!

Tuesday, May 12, 1998 – Roanoke, 4-7 p.m.
The Roanoke Civic Center
Interstate 581 at Route 460 (Orange Avenue)

Wednesday, May 13, 1998 – Rocky Mount, 4-7 p.m.
Benjamin Franklin Middle School, West Cafeteria
275 Middle School Road

Thursday, May 14, 1998 – Collinsville, 4-7 p.m.
Fieldale-Collinsville High School
645 Miles Road (Route 9867)

In This Issue

Identifying Alternatives ◆ Screening Criteria ◆ Public Participation

Study Team Identifies Screening Criteria

How do you narrow a seven-mile-wide corridor down to several feasible locations for a new roadway? In a series of workshops, members of the I-73 Study Team brainstormed important factors that needed to be considered in plotting a possible new road generally following U.S. Route 220 from the Roanoke Valley to North Carolina. The team is comprised of VDOT engineers and staff and an engineering and planning team led by Parsons Brinckerhoff Quade & Douglas, Inc.

Here are guidelines they followed in narrowing down hundreds of suggestions to several feasible locations for I-73 (see Figure 5).

- ***Avoid known:***
  - *Cultural and historic resources*
  - *Parklands*
  - *Hazardous materials sites*
  - *Threatened and endangered species*
  - *Nature Conservancy land*
  - *Open space easements*
- ***Maximize compatibility with land use***
- ***Consider topographic constraints***
- ***Minimize impacts to known wetlands***
- ***Minimize displacements***
- ***Maximize compatibility with Blue Ridge Parkway***
- ***Consider cost***
- ***Compatibility with (ability to support) economic development plans***
- ***Minimize number of stream crossings***
- ***Consider scenic opportunities***
- ***Minimize disruption to community facilities such as schools and churches***
- ***Enhance intermodal connections (airport/rail/automobile) and industrial access***
- ***Enhance accessibility to tourist destinations***
- ***Maintain integrity of existing communities***
- ***Consider impacts to other roadways***

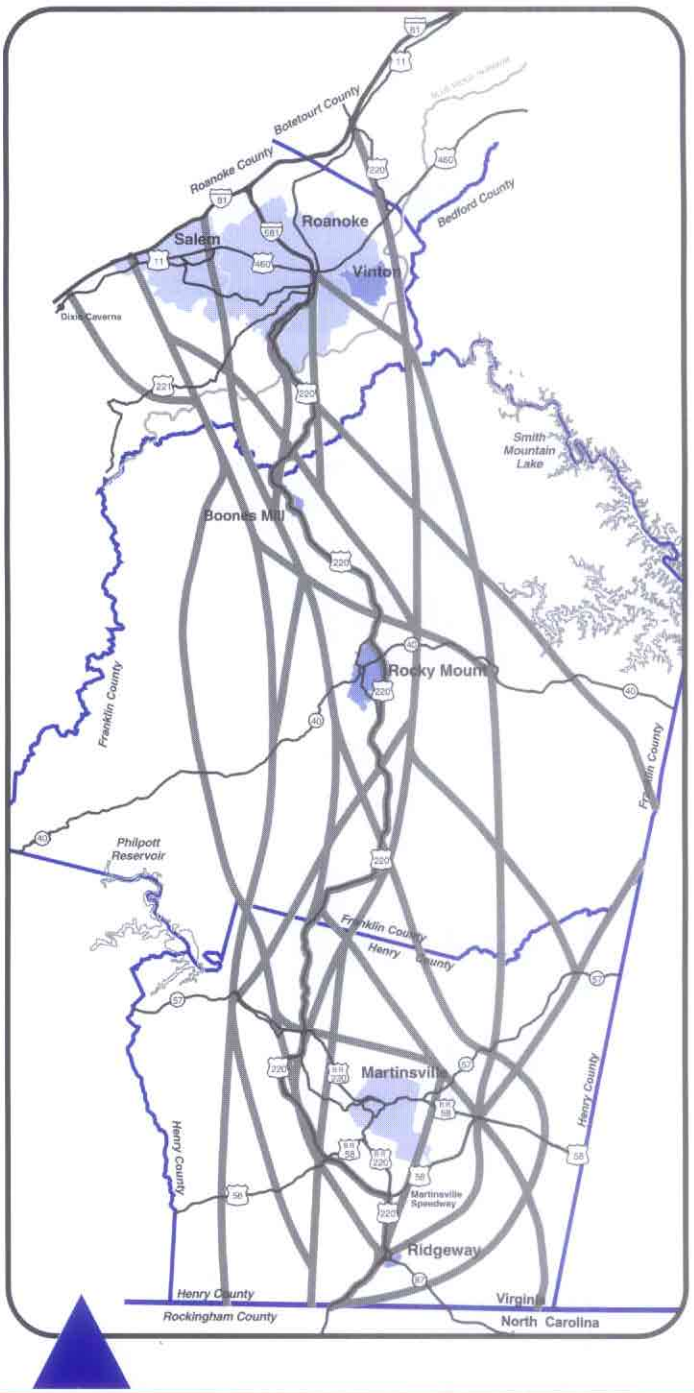


Figure 1:
Martinsville/Henry County

The lines on this map represent all of the alternatives suggested by the public at the public participation meeting held on Tuesday, January 20, in Collinsville.

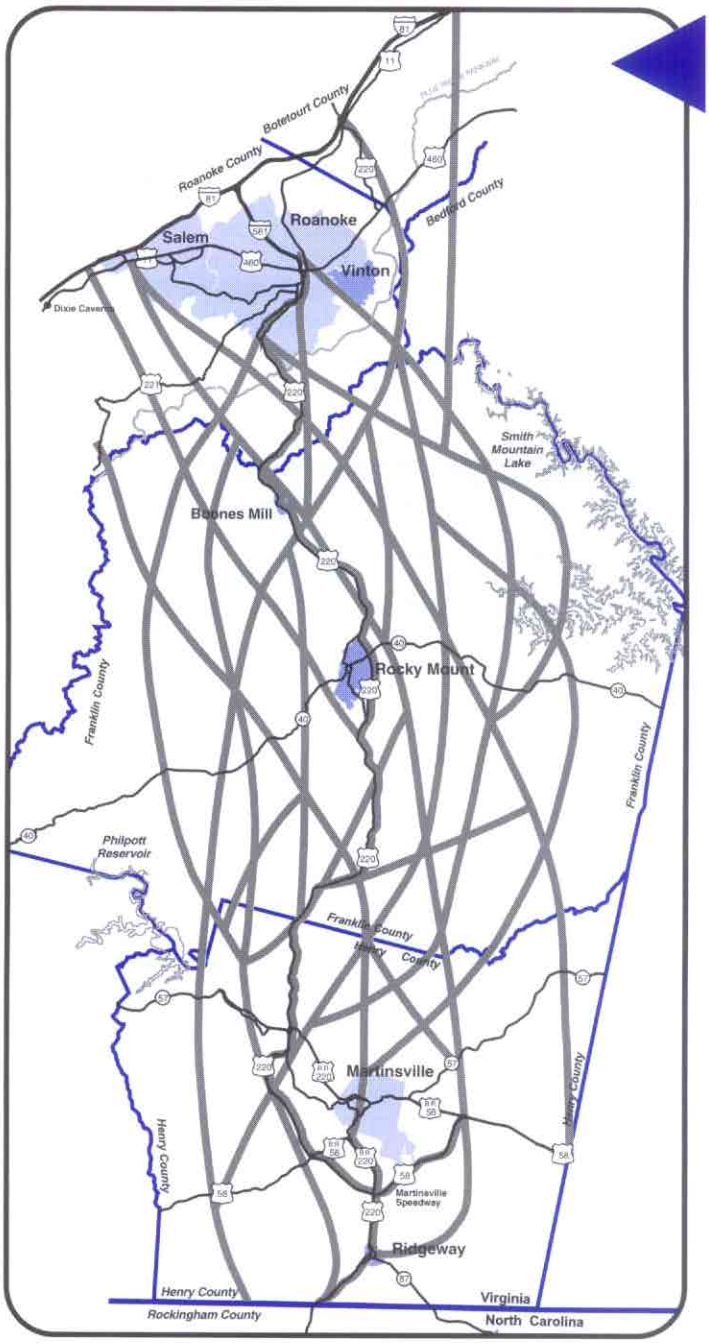


Figure 2:
Rocky Mount/Franklin County

The lines on this map represent all of the alternatives suggested by the public at the public participation meeting held on Wednesday, January 21, in Rocky Mount.

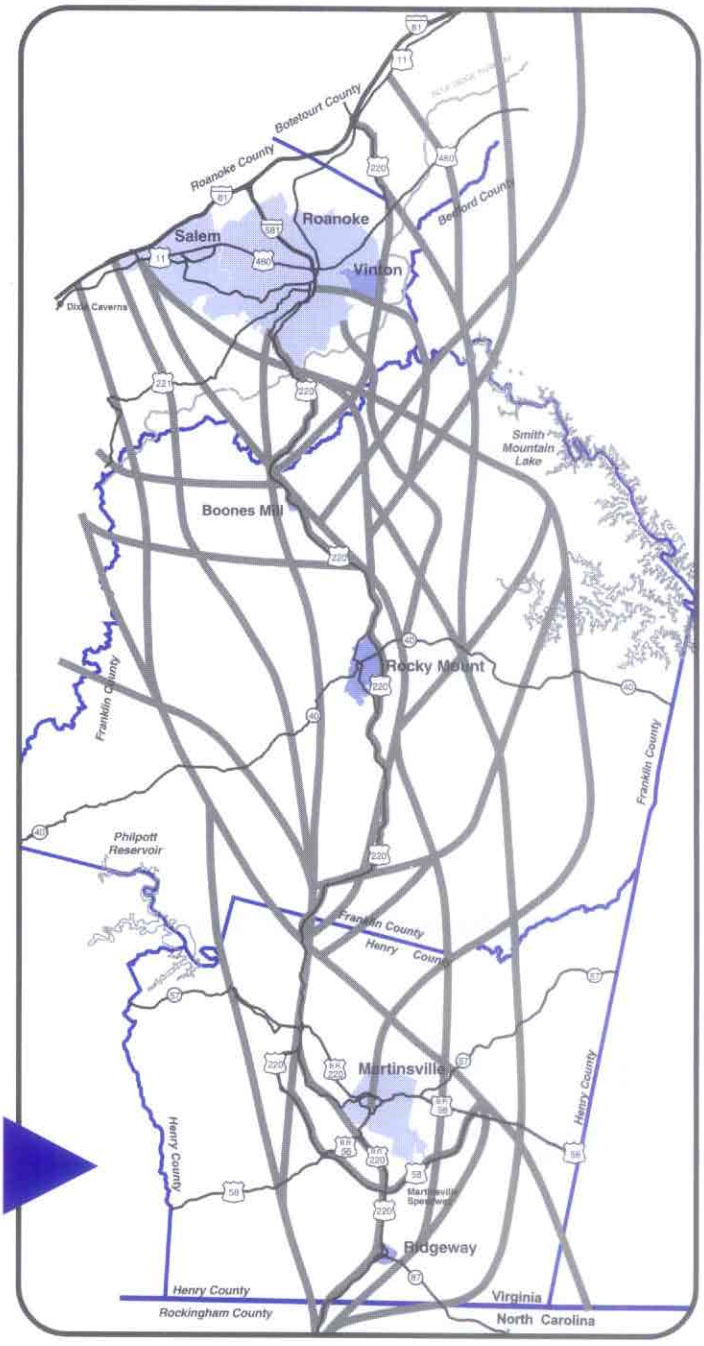


Figure 3:
Roanoke Valley

The lines on this map represent all of the alternatives suggested by the public at the public participation meeting held on Thursday, January 22, in Roanoke.

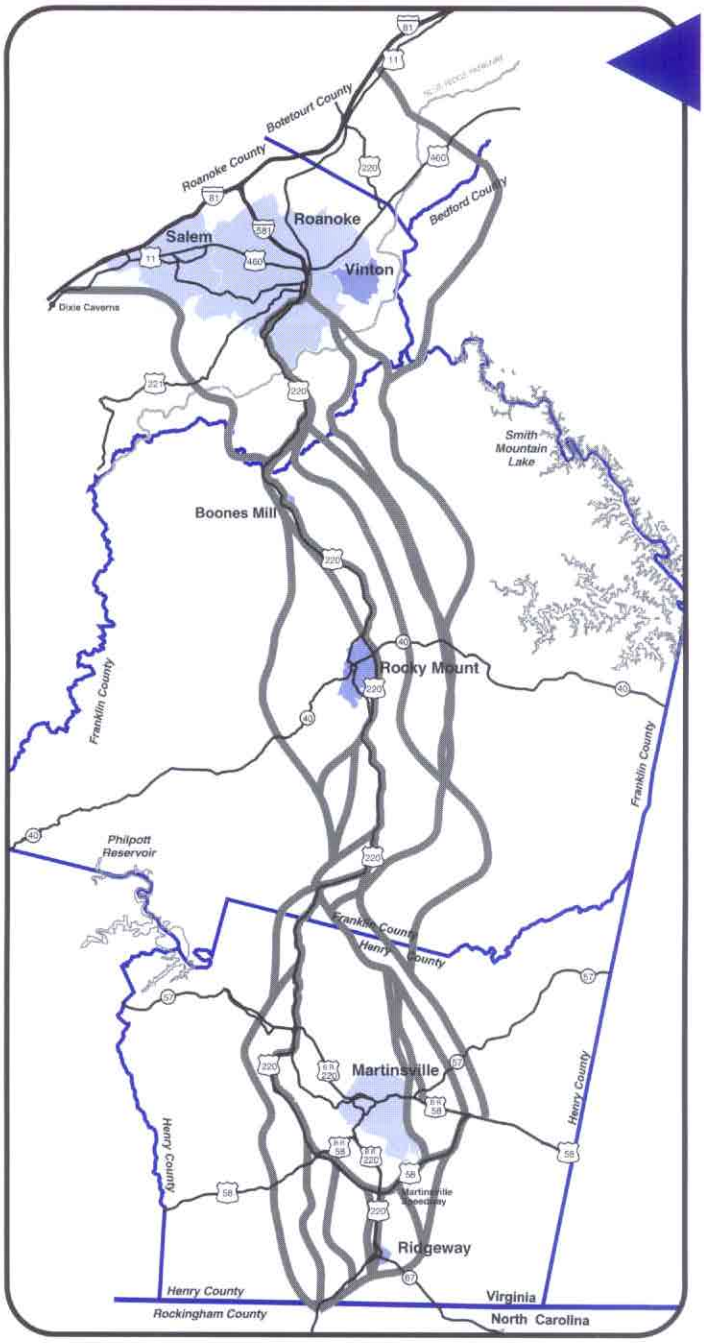
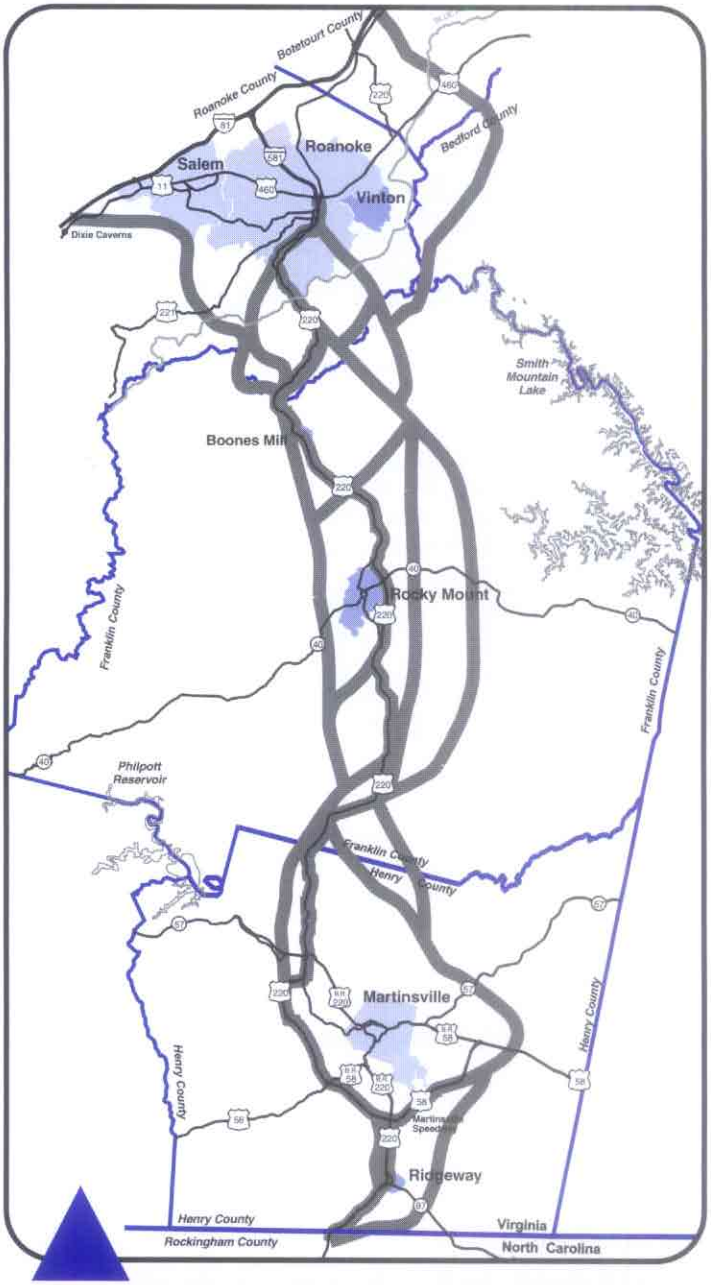


Figure 4:
Additional Suggestions

The lines on this map represent alternatives received from the public after the public participation meetings, from potentially affected jurisdictions, and the Study Team.



What Happened Next?

All of the alternatives suggested were evaluated by the I-73 Study Team using the screening criteria listed on Page 2. Those that did not meet the criteria were eliminated. A map of the general corridors to be studied further is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5:
Conceptual Corridors

This map shows the general corridors that remain for further study. More detailed mapping will be available at the public participation meetings to be held May 12-14.

Alternatives Under Consideration for More Detailed Study

No-Build or Baseline Alternative -

The No-Build Alternative provides baseline conditions against which other alternatives will be compared. Minor intersection, interchange and roadway improvements to address local problems, as well as routine maintenance projects, would occur. This option includes committed and funded roadway and transit projects already programmed for implementation by 2020.

Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative -

This alternative includes all the projects in the No-Build Alternative plus some additional projects. TSM includes strategies that improve the efficiency of existing facilities, including localized roadway improvements. These measures would include alignment or crossover improvements to U.S. Route 220 to improve safety.

New Interstate (I-73) Alternative -

This alternative includes a new interstate with full access control. The interstate would be planned for four, six or eight lanes, as appropriate. Figures 1-4 show the broad range of possible locations for an interstate that were received by the I-73 Study Team. Figure 5 shows the possible locations to be considered for more detailed study.

VDOT Welcomes Citizen Input

Public participation is a crucial component of the I-73 Location Study, and we urge you to continue to provide input. We want to insure that all issues of concern to the public are addressed and considered before any recommendations or decisions are made.

So far, VDOT's Study Team has received thousands of suggestions relating to a possible new interstate between the Roanoke Valley and North Carolina. A first round of public participation meetings was held in January 1998 to inform citizens of the study process and to gather suggestions for possible alternatives. Conducted in Roanoke, Rocky Mount and Collinsville, the meetings were attended by more than 1,230 citizens.

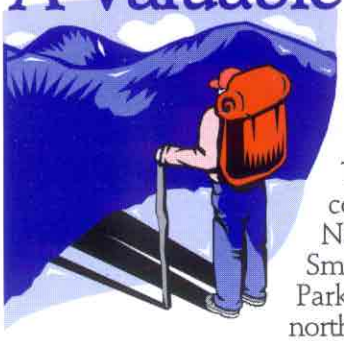
If you attended the meetings, you were able to see exhibits, a video, and to talk with team members. You also were invited to provide comments regarding the study, the public participation program and possible alternatives.

All of the comments received have been recorded in a database, and grouped by categories such as alternatives, environmental impacts, purpose and need, and access for public review. Copies of these comment summaries are available at libraries and VDOT residencies.

Input continues to come from the telephone information line (**1-888-I73-PLAN**), postal mail and Internet e-mail. Here's a look at the I-73 public participation process, to date:

- ***4,028 individuals and/or businesses are on the mailing list***
- ***Two editions of the newsletter have been distributed***
- ***9,000 brochures have been distributed***
- ***1,233 people attended Public Participation Meetings in January; second set of meetings set for May 12-14***
- ***525 calls have been received by the telephone information line***
- ***775 people have submitted written comments***
- ***71 community leaders have been interviewed***
- ***364 people have visited the Web Site***
- ***More than 10 presentations have been made to community associations and business groups***

A Valuable Resource: The Blue Ridge Parkway



An important resource in the I-73 study area is the Blue Ridge Parkway. The 450-mile parkway connects the Shenandoah National Park with the Great Smokey Mountain National Park, meandering through the northwestern portion of the study corridor. The National Park Service is partnering with VDOT to develop and analyze possible alternatives as they relate to crossing park property.

Park staff has recommended several locations for crossing the Parkway that would have minimal impact to visitors. "The Blue Ridge Parkway looks forward to working with the team to develop a corridor plan that meets future transportation needs while protecting parkway and visitor values in the Roanoke area," according to David Anderson, land use specialist with the Park Service.

Citizens Identify I-73 Locations

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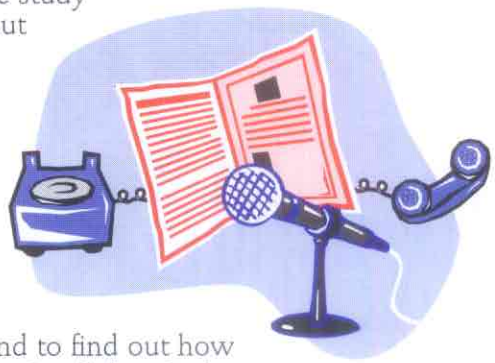
As a result, from hundreds of individual segments, possible locations for I-73 were screened down to several alternatives (see Figure 5).

"Keep in mind that these alternatives do not represent specific alignments," said Altizer. "So it's still too early to talk about exact property impacts. What we do know is that we now have several narrower alternatives within the original seven-mile wide corridor. Each of the alternatives could be 400 to 600 feet wide and will need further study."

In addition to these alternatives, the I-73 Location Study will evaluate the No-Build Alternative, as well as the Transportation System Management Alternative (improvements to existing U.S. Route 220). These alternatives will be presented for review and comment at a second series of public participation meetings scheduled for May 12-14.

How You Can Get Involved and Stay Involved

Members of the I-73 Study Team and VDOT staff appreciate the contributions of those who have participated in the study so far. Public input is a valuable part of the I-73 Location Study. We want to continue hearing from you!



To learn more about the I-73 Location Study and to find out how to get more involved, call the telephone information line: **1-888-I73-PLAN (TYY users call 1-800-307-4630).**

Visit the Web Site at:
www.vdot.state.va.us

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